

American

NEWS & VIEWS

A Weekly Newsletter from Public Affairs, American Embassy

December 28, 2012

Inaugural Balls Are a Long, Varied American Tradition.....	1
Mars Mission Leads a Year of Space Milestones	2
Russia, U.S. to Improve Intellectual Property Rights Protection.....	3
President Obama Says John Kerry Is “Perfect Choice” for Secretary of State.....	3
Kerry Career Marked by Service to Country, Community.....	4
Inclusive Afghan-Led Reconciliation Efforts Crucial, U.S. Says.....	5
State’s Benjamin Assesses Counterterrorism Efforts.....	6
Treasury Dept. Says 4 Companies Linked to Iran Weapons Program.....	7

Inaugural Balls Are a Long, Varied American Tradition

27 December 2012

Washington — After President Obama's public swearing-in for his second term on January 21 and his inaugural address and a parade down Pennsylvania Avenue, activities conclude with evening inaugural balls.

For the 2013 inauguration, President Obama, citing the state of the economy, has asked for only two official inaugural balls, down from 10 after his 2009 inauguration. One of the 2013 balls will be for the president's invited guests, with some tickets for the public. The other will be for military families.

The official inaugural balls are usually by invitation only and the president, vice president and their families make an appearance at most of them. Many unofficial balls — nearly a dozen had been scheduled for the 2013 inauguration as of December 27 — are sponsored by local and national organizations and are open to the public.

The history of inaugural balls is long, and the venues and scope of the festivities have varied, often according to the wishes of the man being sworn in.

On May 7, 1789, one week after the inauguration of George Washington in New York City, sponsors held a ball to honor the new president. It was not until 1809, however, after the inauguration of James Madison at the Capitol in Washington, that the tradition of the inaugural ball began. That night, first lady Dolley Madison hosted a gala at a hotel. Four hundred tickets sold for \$4 each. In 1833, two balls were staged for President Andrew Jackson. William Henry Harrison attended all three of his 1841 inaugural balls.

The inaugural ball quickly turned into a highlight of Washington society, and its location became a prime topic of discussion and angst, the Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies (JCCIC) says. Organizers wanted a building that could accommodate large numbers of guests. A temporary wooden building was erected in the city's Judiciary Square in 1849 for one of Zachary Taylor's inaugural balls. By the time of James Buchanan's inauguration in 1857, the idea of multiple balls was abandoned for one grand ball for thousands of guests. Again a temporary ballroom was built for the occasion.

In 1865, the ball following Abraham Lincoln's second inauguration took place at the Patent Office — the first time a government building was used for the celebration. The inaugural ball for Ulysses Grant in 1869 was held in the Treasury Building. Apparently, there was not enough

room there for dancing, and a snafu in the checkroom forced many guests to leave without their coats and hats, the JCCIC says. So for Grant's 1873 inauguration, a temporary building was again constructed.

Grant's second ball proved a disaster, however, according to the JCCIC. The weather was freezing, and the temporary structure had no heat or insulation. Guests danced in their overcoats and hats, the food was cold, they ran out of coffee and hot chocolate, and even the caged decorative canaries froze.

Later inaugural balls were held at the National Museum Building (now the Smithsonian Arts and Industries Building) and the Pension Building, which became the favorite venue from 1885 through 1909.

In 1913, inaugural organizers began planning the ball to celebrate Woodrow Wilson's inauguration, again to be held at the Pension Building, but Wilson felt the ball was too expensive and unnecessary for the solemn occasion of the inauguration, and asked the Inaugural Committee to cancel it. Washington had not missed an inaugural ball since 1853, when President Franklin Pierce — mourning the recent loss of his son — asked that the ball be canceled. Although some District of Columbia residents felt very disappointed by Wilson's request, others felt relieved, the JCCIC says. The Pension Building was often closed for more than a week in preparation for the ball, causing the government's business there to shut down.

President-elect Warren G. Harding also requested that planners do away with the elaborate ball (and the parade) in 1921, hoping to set an example of thrift and simplicity. The committee complied, and instead, the chairman of the Inaugural Ball Committee hosted a huge private party at his home. Subsequent inaugurations followed this trend, with charity balls becoming the fashion for the inaugurations of Calvin Coolidge, Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt, the JCCIC said.

President Harry Truman revived the official ball in 1949. Organizers for Dwight D. Eisenhower's 1953 inaugural ball added a second event due to the demand for tickets. Eisenhower's second inauguration featured four balls. President John Kennedy attended five in 1961. President Jimmy Carter attempted to strip the balls of their glitz in 1977, according to the JCCIC, calling them parties and charging no more than \$25 each. By the second inaugural of President Bill Clinton in 1997, the number of balls reached an all-time high of 14. George W. Bush's inaugural in 2001 saw the number of official balls decline to eight, and his second inaugural in 2005 was celebrated with nine.

After President Obama's inauguration in 2009, the president and first lady attended 10 official inaugural

balls on January 20, 2009.

Mars Mission Leads a Year of Space Milestones

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 27 December 2012

Washington — The U.S. space agency delved into the secrets of other worlds in 2012, developed and tested new technology to reach those worlds and pursued these goals in partnership with space agencies from many other countries.

The car-sized rover Curiosity landed on the surface of Mars in August, as an Internet audience of millions worldwide watched in wonder and fascination.

Curiosity, equipped with the Mars Space Laboratory, is the fourth motorized vehicle NASA has landed on the Red Planet and the most sophisticated. Its mission is to look for signs that a habitable environment existed on the planet at some time in its past.

“We landed right on an ancient riverbed,” said Michael Meyer, lead scientist of NASA’s Mars Exploration Program, at an early December briefing. Water-worn pebbles photographed by Curiosity in its earliest days assured that a primary element for life flowed across the now-dry surface at one time.

Curiosity has a two-year mission on Mars. Mission headquarters at California’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory will soon start the rover on a trek toward a nearby mountain in search of more signs of an environment that might have supported life.

The scientific instruments aboard the craft are collecting data on multiple features of the landscape. An environmental monitoring station built and provided by Spanish scientists records information about daily and seasonal changes in Martian weather. Finland’s Meteorological Institute contributed to this scientific instrument.

Collecting a Martian year’s worth of environmental data will provide critical information for NASA planners and engineers, who look toward how to sustain the first human crew to land on Mars in the decades ahead.

Mars has very little atmosphere, leaving the surface exposed to high radiation levels from the sun and space, and that’s a major concern for a future crewed mission. Germany’s space agency has contributed to the design and construction of the radiation assessment device that will track that critical element of conditions surrounding Curiosity.

The Russian Federal Space Agency contributed an instrument critical to the detection of water, the Dynamic

Albedo of Neutrons, which can detect water bound into shallow underground minerals.

SPACE STATION

The International Space Station (ISS) has been at the forefront of scientific collaboration between NASA and other space agencies. That partnership celebrated 12 years of permanent human habitation on ISS in early November. The international residents rotating through the station have tended more than 1,500 experiments, many of them producing results that further human knowledge of medicine, environment and the universe.

ISS research findings released in August identified techniques for helping crew members retain more bone density during months in a no-gravity environment. The deterioration of bone in a weightless environment is another risk to space travelers if they are to voyage farther and farther from the home planet.

SOLAR SYSTEM

International scientific collaboration in space is also enlarging our understanding of planet Earth. Data supplied by NASA and the European Space Agency are helping experts produce what the space agency calls “the most comprehensive and accurate assessment to date of ice sheet losses in Greenland and Antarctica.” Melting and separation of these ice masses is linked to climate change and a resulting sea level rise. NASA research announced in November found that Greenland and Antarctica are losing more than three times as much ice as they did in the 1990s. The German Aerospace Center was a partner in the study.

Ice on Mercury is another important NASA discovery in 2012. An unmanned spacecraft arrived at the innermost planet in March 2011 and this year provided “compelling support” for the theory that Mercury stores significant water ice in its polar craters, which never turn toward the sun. How much ice? About enough to put the 177-square-kilometer city of Washington under more than 3 kilometers of ice, NASA says.

Even with all these activities under way, NASA looks toward the future. In July, the space agency marked a milestone in manned spaceflight with delivery for testing of the Orion capsule, the next-generation vehicle to take humans to space. NASA said Orion will become the most advanced spacecraft ever designed, capable of sustaining life for its crew on long flights through space and then re-entering a planetary atmosphere.

NASA and private-sector partners are also advancing development of the new space launch system that will provide the power to lift Orion beyond the bonds of

gravity and explore targets in the solar system.

In early December the space agency announced a long-range plan for Mars exploration. Several more robotic science missions will provide further understanding of the Red Planet before a crewed mission takes off in the 2030s.

Russia, U.S. to Improve Intellectual Property Rights Protection

26 December 2012

Washington — The United States and Russia have agreed to an Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Action Plan to improve IPR protection and enforcement. The action plan addresses priority areas including combating IPR infringement over the Internet and strengthening IPR enforcement.

“Agreement on the IPR Action Plan represents a significant step at a historic time in our bilateral economic relationship,” U.S. Trade Representative Ron Kirk said December 21 in announcing the agreement. “With this step, Russia and the United States have demonstrated a serious commitment to continued engagement on strengthening IPR protection and enforcement. This step is particularly important in light of Russia’s recent membership in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the application of the WTO agreement between us. Russia has made commendable progress in improving its IPR regime, and the action plan signals a commitment to maintain that momentum to address IPR priorities.”

“The IPR Action Plan delivers on shared U.S. and Russian objectives, as reaffirmed by the recent G8 Ministerial Declaration, to promote strong IPR protection and enforcement to advance our innovative economies,” Kirk continued. “IPR theft is among the chief threats to any innovative economy. Intellectual property rights not only protect our creators and innovators, but also promote foreign investment, economic development, and job creation. The IPR Action Plan affirms the importance both sides place on advancing IPR protection and enforcement.”

The IPR Action Plan endorses action on a broad range of IPR priorities, including:

- Combating copyright piracy over the Internet, including actions such as takedowns of infringing content, action against persons responsible for IPR crimes, coordination with rights holders, cooperation and information exchange between IPR enforcement officials, and devotion of resources and personnel to law enforcement agencies to combat piracy over the Internet.
- Enhancing IPR enforcement, including actions against

counterfeiting, piracy and circumventing technological protection measures; imposing deterrent penalties and sentences; conducting raids; seizing and, where appropriate, destroying IPR infringing products and the equipment and materials used to produce such products; and promoting transparency and public awareness of IPR enforcement actions.

- Coordinating on legislation and other Issues, including on Russia’s draft legislation on liability for Internet service providers to combat Internet piracy, consulting on implementation of Russia’s WTO pharmaceutical test data protection commitments, administrative penalties, and exchanging information on enforcement mechanisms and best practices for judges.

In 2013, the United States will work closely with Russia to enhance bilateral coordination on IPR protection and enforcement, including through the U.S.-Russian Intellectual Property Working Group, USTR said. This work will focus systematically on Russia taking actions identified in the action plan, the agency added.

President Obama Says John Kerry Is “Perfect Choice” for Secretary of State

By Stephen Kaufman | Staff Writer | 21 December 2012

Washington — President Obama has announced he is nominating Massachusetts Senator John Kerry to be the next secretary of state. If confirmed by the U.S. Senate, Kerry will serve as America’s top diplomat during the Obama administration’s second term.

The president announced his choice at the White House December 21, telling reporters that Kerry’s long public service career has already earned him respect and confidence from leaders around the world. Kerry has been chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for the past six years and has served on the committee since his election to the Senate in 1984.

Kerry is also a decorated Vietnam War veteran and was the 2004 Democratic presidential nominee.

“He is not going to need a lot of on-the-job training,” Obama said. “I think it’s fair to say that few individuals know as many presidents and prime ministers or grasp our foreign policies as firmly as John Kerry. And this makes him a perfect choice to guide American diplomacy in the years ahead.”

Under the U.S. Constitution, the president nominates high government officials such as Cabinet members, federal judges and ambassadors with the “advice and consent” of the U.S. Senate. The Senate typically exercises its advice and consent by holding committee-level confirmation hearings in which senators question the nominee and

discuss his or her credentials before issuing a report on whether to recommend approval by the full Senate.

Once the committee's report is issued, the 100-member Senate can discuss and debate the nomination and vote on whether to confirm. If a majority of senators votes to confirm, the nomination is accepted.

President Obama said he is confident the Senate will quickly confirm Kerry. If that happens, Kerry will need to resign from the U.S. Senate, and Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick would appoint a temporary replacement ahead of a special election that would be held between 145 and 160 days from Kerry's resignation date.

The president said that over the past four years his administration has begun "a new era of American leadership" by ending its war in Iraq, strengthening global alliances and standing up for human dignity around the world.

"It's fair to say that there are going to be some great challenges ahead. An uncertain world will continue to test our nation," Obama said, but the United States is "safer, stronger and more respected in the world" as his second term begins.

Kerry has played a central role in every major U.S. foreign policy debate for nearly 30 years, the president said.

"As we turn the page on a decade of war, he understands that we've got to harness all elements of American power and ensure that they're working together: diplomatic and development, economic and political, military and intelligence, as well as the power of our values, which inspire so many people around the world," he said.

If confirmed, Kerry will succeed Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton, who had announced earlier in 2012 that she was stepping down from the position at the end of Obama's first term.

Clinton said Obama had made "an excellent choice" in choosing Kerry, saying in a December 21 statement that the senator has been tested in war, government, and diplomacy. "Time and again, he has proven his mettle," Clinton said.

Along with his experience in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Clinton said Kerry has been tasked by the Obama administration to "undertake delicate diplomatic missions and to deliver difficult messages" to foreign leaders.

"As I have learned, being able to talk candidly as someone who has won elections and also lost them is an enormous asset when engaging with emerging or fragile

democracies," Clinton said, referring to the fact that both she and Kerry have unsuccessfully sought the U.S. presidency.

Kerry would deliver "high caliber leadership" as America's top diplomat, and Clinton said his experience is needed at a time when the United States is confronting crucial challenges such as the transfer of security responsibility in Afghanistan, nonproliferation, climate change and the promotion of human dignity and economic development around the world.

Kerry Career Marked by Service to Country, Community

By Charlene Porter | Staff Writer | 21 December 2012

Washington — President Obama made his first nomination to the Cabinet that will serve the second term of his presidency. He will submit the name of Massachusetts Senator John Kerry to the U.S. Senate for confirmation as secretary of state as the law requires.

"In a sense, John's entire life has prepared him for this role," President Obama said at the White House announcement December 21.

At 69 years old, John Kerry has spent more than 40 years in service to his country and his community. He joined the U.S. Naval Reserve in 1966 during the Vietnam War. He served as a lieutenant, and left the war with medals, commendations and a sense that the war had gone terribly wrong.

He stepped on the national stage as a decorated serviceman who turned against his country's policy in the war. A young man still, he took his opposition before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that was holding hearings on the war in 1971.

Kerry recounted experiences of seeing U.S. soldiers victimizing Vietnamese citizens in ways that dishonored the war effort and the nation. He testified on behalf of the organization Vietnam Veterans Against the War, and urged an end to what he described as a misguided conflict.

"How do you ask a man to be the last man to die in Vietnam?" Kerry questioned a panel of senators at that 1971 hearing. "How do you ask a man to be the last man to die for a mistake?"

Kerry won admirers and enemies in an American public bitterly divided by the war. He joined other returning soldiers to form Vietnam Veterans of America, a still-active organization with 65,000 members.

A few years later, after completion of law school, Kerry

became a prosecuting attorney in Middlesex County, Massachusetts, a leading position in a community's law enforcement structure. The position is a springboard for higher office for many who serve, and so it was for Kerry. The record he built fighting organized crime and defending victims' rights won him the public's support for election as lieutenant governor of Massachusetts in 1982. After two years of service in that post, Kerry's political career advanced to the U.S. Senate where he is now serving his fifth term.

In 2004, Kerry aspired to higher office. He won the Democratic nomination for president, leading his party in a battle to unseat incumbent Republican President George W. Bush. The war in Iraq and the global war on terror were key issues in that campaign. While Kerry had initially voted for the military campaign in Iraq, by 2004 he was opposed to its execution, and campaigned for an end to the war.

With the memory of the 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States still fresh, the public voted to stay the course, re-electing Bush.

Kerry returned to the Senate and now serves as the chairman of the committee where he delivered his controversial testimony about the Vietnam War years before. The committee handles legislation on key foreign policy and national security issues facing the United States, including Afghanistan and Pakistan, nuclear nonproliferation, and global climate change.

Kerry has served as an administration emissary already, conducting talks on the president's behalf in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

On another current foreign affairs issue, Kerry decried the proposals for increased government control over the Internet recently adopted at the World Conference on International Telecommunications. "To suggest altering the current stakeholder-led, voluntary structure [of Internet governance] risks opening the door to restrictions that could limit the freedom of expression and change the underlying principles that have given us the Internet as we know it," he said.

Kerry is also a published author and an advocate of strong policies to protect the environment. He released *This Moment on Earth*, co-authored with his wife, Teresa Heinz Kerry, in 2008. The book profiles "down-to-earth pragmatic people," the authors write in the foreword, "who have set out to solve a problem ... backed by nothing more than the sense they were doing the right thing." Coinciding with the failed 2004 presidential campaign, Kerry released *A Call to Service: My Vision for a Better America*, in which he wrote, "We have the capacity to lift the life of our own land as well as lead the

world to a safe and more hopeful future."

Inclusive Afghan-Led Reconciliation Efforts Crucial, U.S. Says

21 December 2012

Washington — An inclusive political dialogue among the Afghan people is their country's surest path to long-term peace and stability, and it is vital that all voices be heard, a senior Obama administration official told the United Nations Security Council.

Speaking in New York December 19, Rosemary DiCarlo, the deputy permanent U.S. representative to the United Nations, said the United States will continue to support the Afghan people as their country undergoes security and political transitions in 2014, and that it is important to pursue an Afghan-led reconciliation process.

"The future of Afghanistan is indeed for Afghans to determine. Afghans themselves will need to have the difficult conversations about how to build an inclusive society that reflects their own needs and wants," she said.

DiCarlo said the United States was encouraged in November by Afghan High Peace Council Chairman Salahuddin Rabbani's briefing to the Security Council on the talks. She also welcomed a forum recently held in Kabul between Afghan leaders, lawmakers and women representatives of Afghanistan's provincial peace councils and High Peace Council to discuss ways to integrate women's views into the reconciliation process.

"Afghans are sitting down with other Afghans to determine the future of their country. It is vital that all voices be heard," she said.

She also welcomed Pakistan's engagement and its call to bring the Taliban into peace negotiations.

DiCarlo said the U.N. Security Council's Afghanistan/Taliban Sanctions (1988) Committee is designating individuals who are threatening Afghan peace, security and stability, and is encouraging sanctioned individuals to reconcile.

"Those who refuse to meaningfully participate in reconciliation should know that the Security Council will continue to develop necessary measures to inhibit their ability to execute violent attacks in Afghanistan," she said and urged the Taliban to "fulfill its obligations and decide to move forward."

DiCarlo noted that Afghan presidential and provincial elections are scheduled to take place in April 2014 and said an inclusive, transparent and credible process "will help to build a political system that reflects a pluralistic

society and remains firmly founded in the Afghan Constitution.”

OBAMA AND KARZAI MEETING IN WASHINGTON

Afghan President Hamid Karzai will be meeting with President Obama in Washington in early January. White House press secretary Jay Carney told reporters the two leaders plan to discuss the role of the United States in Afghanistan following the 2014 transition of full security responsibility to Afghan forces.

“Their meeting will be an important opportunity to discuss implementation of the strategic partnership the two presidents signed in May,” Carney said December 14, referring to a 10-year strategic partnership agreement that was signed during Obama’s visit to Kabul.

The agreement committed the United States and Afghanistan to initiate negotiations on a Bilateral Security Agreement to supersede the current Status of Forces Agreement that permits U.S. forces to operate in the country.

Carney said Obama and Karzai plan to discuss the progress being made in those negotiations, saying an agreement would “lay out the rules of the road for a potential U.S. military presence after 2014.”

Obama also looks forward to discussing the Afghan-led peace process as well as the region and the future of Afghanistan's security forces, he said.

State’s Benjamin Assesses Counterterrorism Efforts

By Phillip Kurata | Staff Writer | 21 December 2012

Washington — The State Department’s top official on counterterrorism says significant progress was made against violent extremists during President Obama’s first term.

Daniel Benjamin, the department’s coordinator for counterterrorism, said the elimination of Osama bin Laden in 2011 marked a milestone in the fight against al-Qaida, demonstrating the “extraordinary proficiency of the U.S. military and intelligence communities.” Benjamin said that in addition to bin Laden, more than 20 of al-Qaida’s top 30 leaders have been removed, making it difficult for al-Qaida to raise money, train recruits and plan attacks outside its region.

Benjamin said an offshoot of the original al-Qaida — al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula — also has been rolled back as a result of a comprehensive strategy of combating terror, addressing the need for political reform and delivering humanitarian and economic aid to Yemen. He noted that in the first two years of the Obama

administration, al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula unsuccessfully attempted to destroy a number of airplanes bound for the United States.

“The trend lines [in Yemen] are positive. In particular, the resolve of President [Abd Rabuh Mansur] Hadi and the Yemeni people has made a big difference,” Benjamin said.

The coordinator said Somalia is emerging from two decades of strife with a new provisional constitution, parliament and president. He said the Somali national forces and the African Union mission in Somalia, with strong financial support and training from the United States and Western partners, have driven the al-Shabaab terrorist group from major cities in southern Somalia, leaving the terrorist group fragmented and weakened.

The counterterrorism coordinator said the al-Qaida core is on the path to defeat, but events in the Middle East and North Africa in the past two years have ushered in new complications.

In northern Mali, terrorists in another al-Qaida affiliate — al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb — are attempting to build a safe haven supported by exiled fighters and weapons from the army of the toppled Libyan dictator Muammar Qadhafi, he said. The Tuareg rebellion in northern Mali and a coup in the Mali capital, Bamako, have brought a dangerous instability to the Sahel region of Africa.

In nearby Nigeria, the Boko Haram group with ties to al-Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb is exploiting historical grievances in the northern region of the country, winning recruits and public sympathy. “There are reports that it is developing financial and training links with other extremists and wants to operate on a bigger stage,” Benjamin said.

In Libya, he said, the revolution weakened security institutions and created an environment that terrorists are drawn to. “Extremists can cause real problems for states undergoing difficult transitions to democracy,” the coordinator said.

The world of counterterrorism is changing fast, as evidenced by the shrinkage of some of the most dangerous threats and the emergence of new ones, the coordinator said. He noted that al-Qaida was not part of the popular uprisings that have led to democratic transitions in the Middle East and North Africa, but violent extremists are looking for opportunities to exploit the political transitions.

Benjamin said the international community now has a unique opportunity to help build the capacity of democratizing nations willing to take on the challenge of

defeating terrorism. He said strategic patience and continued engagement by all parties are required to see the task through.

Treasury Dept. Says 4 Companies Linked to Iran Weapons Program

21 December 2012

Washington — The U.S. Department of the Treasury has designated four companies and one individual under Executive Order (E.O.) 13382 for ties to Iran's weapons program. One company, the SAD Import Export Company, also has provided weaponry to the Assad regime in Syria, the department says.

E.O. 13382 sanctions proliferators of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their supporters. Designations under the order generally prohibit transactions between the named entities and any U.S. person, and freeze any assets the designees may have under U.S. jurisdiction.

The designations also carry consequences under the Comprehensive Iran Sanctions, Accountability, and Divestment Act of 2010. As of December 21, foreign financial institutions that facilitate significant transactions or provide significant financial services for the sanctioned entities and individual can lose access to the U.S. financial system.

Under E.O. 13382, the Treasury Department designated the SAD Import Export Company, Chemical Industries and Development of Materials Group, and Marine Industries Organization for their ties to Iran's Defense Industries Organization (DIO) or Iran's Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Logistics. The United Nations Sanctions Committee also designated the SAD Import Export Company December 20 under the U.N. asset freeze authority of Security Council Resolution 1737 dealing with Iran.

Doostan International Company was designated for its support to Iran's Aerospace Industries Organization, which was identified as a WMD proliferator by the president in the Annex to E.O. 13382.

The Treasury Department also designated Mustafa Esbati, the director of Marine Industries Organization.

DIO has been linked by the International Atomic Energy Agency to Iran's centrifuge production and was previously cited for its involvement in the Iranian nuclear program. DIO is also identified in the Annex to U.N. Security Council Resolution 1737.

In addition to its involvement in Iran's WMD program, DIO has been used by the Iranian government to assist the Assad regime's violent crackdown in Syria, the

Treasury Department said.

According to the department, SAD Import Export Company shipped weapons to the Syrian Armed Forces on behalf of DIO. These shipments were designed to assist the Syrian government's production of mortars and missiles, which have been used against the civilian population of Syria.

"We will continue to expose the companies and individuals involved in Iran's illicit weapons program," Treasury Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence David S. Cohen said. "We will also continue to work to hold Iran accountable for its failure to meet its international nonproliferation obligations and to expose its support of the [Assad] regime's violence."

(This is a product of the Bureau of International Information Programs, U.S. Department of State. Web site: <http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov>)